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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

DEPT PASS: GUATEMALA (2) DEPARTMENT OF STATE A-102

REVIEWED BY *CAJ* DATE *05/10/69*
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATEDDEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
MAY 1 - 1969

FROM : Amembassy Guatemala

DATE: April 28, 1969

SUBJECT: INTERNAL SECURITY: IMPACTO Alleges Government Covering Up

REF :

1. Like the rest of the local press, the sensationalist morning daily IMPACTO gave large headlines to the discovery of the mutilated remains of a comisionado militar and his wife found near the Bârcena Agricultural Station near Guatemala City. But while all commented upon the similarity between these victims and two other bodies--one a Fourth Corps National Policeman--found during the past week (all tortured, mutilated by machete blows, shot, and one hand or arm amputated), only IMPACTO alleged that six other victims had been found in various areas near the City as well. The paper added, "Normally, at least up to now, the present chiefs of police have tried to treat these crimes as secret. When these stories are published in the press, either based upon reports from correspondents...or from news-hawks who have gone to the scene, the newspapers have always been criticized because police sources complain that these items 'greatly hurt the country and that it would be better to omit them or relegate them to the last page, almost as rumors'."

2. COMMENT: The IMPACTO assertion that the situation is under-reported is likely correct, although we have no confirmation that the number of victims has reached ten. We have reported earlier (A-85) the security forces' inclination to minimize possible insurgent activity. These atrocity-type killings could have other motivation than mere elimination or vengeance. The pattern of torture and mutilation, which is the only firm evidence presently available, could be interpreted to be part of a deliberate design to create a "wave of terror" psychosis.

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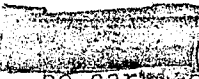
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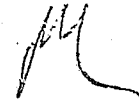
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 there is always the possibility that crimes of this kind could be carried out by maverick leftist elements. They could equally well be perpetrated by maverick rightist elements seeking to create an atmosphere of confusion and disturbance, or they could simply be caused by personal blood-feuds or other non-political motives. Finally, IMPACTO often finds it convenient to embellish its news with pure sensationalist speculation in an effort to sell more copies.

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